CHAPTER FIVE

MASHONALAND/SOUTHERN RHODESIA:
THE RECRUITMENT OF CLERGY

We have examined in Chapter Four the reasons why successive Bishops of Mashonaland/SR between 1890–1925 found it very difficult to obtain adequate financial help for the diocese from England and the ‘mother church’. This chapter is concerned with a parallel difficulty experienced in finding and retaining clergymen. It is, therefore, primarily a study of recruits and recruiting.

I Dependence, local vocations, sources of recruits

In 1890 when work in Mashonaland began, all the branches of the overseas church, whether new or established, colonial or missionary, were dependent to some degree upon the Church of England for staff, just as they were for financial support. Only one area, Newfoundland, was producing all of its own clergy by 1925.¹

The CPSA, to which Mashonaland/SR belonged, was one of the most heavily dependent of the overseas churches. In 1914, for instance, when there were 605 clergy serving in the CPSA, only 140 of them, fewer than a quarter, were locally-born (91 were black, 46 were white, 3 were ‘coloured’ or of mixed ancestry). In New Zealand in 1913, by comparison, more than two-thirds of the clergy, 249 out of 327, were local men (204 were white, 45 Maori). By 1925, New Zealand was almost as self-sufficient as Newfoundland but only about a third of the CPSA clergy were locally-born.²

The weakness of the CPSA lay chiefly in her colonial work: while the number of clergy produced by indigenous communities increased

¹ CE/CA/MC, The Call from our Own People Overseas (Westminster: 1927), 14.
² Ibid., 14, 86; E.G.S. Gibson, ‘The South African Church and the Church at Home’, ETW XII (Oct 1914), 376; CE/CBM, Missions Overseas, Eighth Annual Review (London: 1915), 42.
significantly over the period, very few came from her settler population. By 1925, only 60, barely a tenth, of the white clergy (615) were locally-born. The CPSA therefore remained heavily dependent throughout the period of this study upon recruits from England, particularly for men to minister to her settler congregations.

She was also to some degree dependent on English emigrants to South Africa: the figures for colonial ordinations look less bleak if those for Englishmen who had emigrated to South Africa as laymen and subsequently been ordained are admitted. Such men numbered 30 in 1914, for example, when there were 46 locally-born white clergy and immigrants out-numbered colonials at the provincial theological college from its foundation in 1904 until the 1930s.

A study of the origins of the one hundred clergy who served in Mashonaland/SR between 1890–1925 reveals the type of pattern that might be expected for a new diocese in the CPSA. There were (as we have seen earlier) only a handful of local vocations: six locally-born clergy were ordained between 1919 and 1925, five of them from indigenous communities and one from the settlers.

Mashonaland/SR, like the rest of Southern Africa, also produced a few vocations from English-born immigrants but these men returned to England to train and only one ever served in the diocese: W. J. Keates (the son of immigrants to the Eastern Cape) who was ordained in England in 1915 and returned, as a recruit, to work briefly in Southern Rhodesia in 1920 before being invalided out to a lower altitude in 1921.

There were also two groups of clergy serving in Mashonaland/SR in the period whose recruitment was not the responsibility of the diocese. These were nine members of the Community of the Resurrection (Mirfield), which took charge of Penhalonga in 1915 and nine men who worked for the South African Church Railway Mission. The remaining 76 men, however, three-quarters of the Mashonaland/SR clergy, had to be found outside the diocese.

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3 By 1933, 167 of the 696 serving clergy were indigenous: With One Accord in South Africa, An Interim Statement circulated, with permission, before the Provincial Missionary Conference, 1933 (Johannesburg: Imprinted at the C.R. Press, Rosettenville, 1933), 23.
4 CE/CA/MC, The Call from our Own People Overseas, 14, 86.
5 Gibson, ‘The South African Church’, 376; Ch.Ch. (May 6th, 1904), 285; The Paulatim, 1 (Oct 1st, 1933), 3.